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**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** MEMBERS, ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**FROM:** ROBERT FRANCIOSI, DEPUTY ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

**SUBJECT:** PROPOSED CHANGES TO SCHOOL EVALUATION SYSTEM CARRIED OUT UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

**DATE:** 7/5/2005

**(REF: RE05008-E)**

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**SUMMARY**

On June 27, 2005 the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) will request that the Board approve three changes to the school evaluation system carried out under the No Child Left Behind Act. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with additional information regarding the proposed changes.

The Arizona Department of Education carries out an evaluation of school performance to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This evaluation determines if a school made adequate yearly progress (AYP) by meeting criteria defined in the federal law. A school's AYP status is taken into account in its AZ LEARNS state evaluation. AYP evaluations are released separately from AZ LEARNS at the beginning of September.

In 2003, the Board approved certain components of the AYP formula used by the Department:

- In June 2003 the Board approved the threshold of a 94 percent school-wide attendance rate and a 71 percent graduation rate as additional indicators of school performance. A school must have an attendance rate of 94 percent or, if a high school, a graduation rate of 71 percent to make AYP.
- In August 2003 the Board approved methods for determining if small and K-2 schools made AYP.

The ADE is requesting the following changes to the above policies:

- The Board is being asked to lower the attendance threshold from 94 percent to 90 percent.
- The Board is being asked to amend the evaluation method for K-2 schools to conform to federal requirements.
- The Board is being asked to amend the evaluation method for small schools to make it conform more closely to that used for other schools.

## ADJUSTMENT TO ATTENDANCE RATE THRESHOLD

NCLB requires that schools be evaluated according to percentage of students showing proficiency in state standards (i.e. passing AIMS) and an additional indicator of academic performance. For high schools, the law mandates that this additional indicator be the graduation rate. The law gives discretion to the states to choose the additional indicator for elementary schools. Arizona, along with 34 other states has chosen to use the school-wide attendance rate.

On June 30, 2003 the Board approved a threshold of 94 percent for the attendance rate, and an expected gain of 1 percentage point. For an elementary school to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), it must either have an attendance rate equal to or greater than 94 percent, or show a 1 percentage point gain in its attendance rate over the previous year. In 2004, 151 schools failed to meet this criteria; 88 schools failed to make AYP solely because of failing to meet the attendance rate goal (out of 303 schools not making AYP).

Although the majority of elementary schools easily meet the 94 percent threshold, it is more formidable for rural schools, reservation schools, and middle schools. Attendance rates for middle schools, grades six through nine, are lower and show much greater variance than those for elementary schools. This biases the AYP formula against middle schools. The attendance rate goal of 90 percent is equal to or greater than the goals of approximately thirteen other states that use the attendance rate as an indicator of school performance.

## AYP FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

In August 2003 the Board approved an AYP evaluation method for small schools. The definition of a small school was the same as that used for AZ LEARNS: a school with less than 100 students in the baseline year (2001-2002), and less than 30 students in more than one-third of its subject/grade combinations. For schools meeting this definition, the Board approved the following method:

1. To determine if a school met the annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for percentage of students passing, student AIMS scores were to be aggregated across grades in the current year. For example, if a school had 12 out of 15 students pass third grade math and 10 out of 20 pass fifth grade math, the percentage of students passing was determined to be  $(12+10)/(15+20) = 63$  percent. Percentage of students assessed is determined the same way as for other schools.
2. The additional indicator (graduation and attendance rates) for small schools was to be determined in the same manner as for other schools.

This definition is problematic because Arizona has different AMOs for each grade. For example, the AMOs for third and fifth grade math are 32 and 20 percent. This raises the question of what AMO to apply to a group of scores added across grades. The obvious alternatives are a simple average  $(32+20)/2 = 26$  or an average weighted by the number of students. Either measure has problems. A simple average would be biased for or against schools depending on how many students they had in the given grades. Weighted averages would vary by school and by year. This would create a moving target that would confuse and frustrate schools.

To avoid these problems, ADE wishes to do as most other states do and aggregate scores for the same subject and grade across years. For example, if over the past three years a school had the following scores for third grade math:

Year	Number tested	Number passed
2003	15	10
2004	15	10
2005	15	10
Total	45	30

The percent of students passing would be  $30/45 = 67$  percent, which would be compared to the AMO used for non-small schools.

### AYP FOR K-2 SCHOOLS

In August 2003 the Board approved an AYP evaluation method for K-2 schools. Since these schools do not serve grades which are given the AIMS, an alternate method of evaluation for these schools is needed.

K-2 schools are currently evaluated based on the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the SAT 9. As with other schools, annual measurable objectives were set for the percentage of students that must hit the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for a school to make AYP. These AMOs are raised every year by one percentage point. This year they are set to be 22 percent for math and 21 percent for reading.

This method was a transition measure to be used until ADE was able to track the test scores of individual students across years. The emphasis of NCLB is measuring student performance against state standards i.e. the AIMS. States are generally discouraged from using a norm-referenced test for AYP calculations.

ADE now has the ability to track test scores across years. Consequently, we desire to implement an AYP evaluation method for K-2 schools based on AIMS, as originally promised. This method is used by other states facing the same circumstances. The AYP evaluation for K-2 schools will be based on the performance of their “graduates” on the third grade AIMS. ADE will create rosters of students who attended K-2 schools in the 2003-04 school year. It will then match these rosters to the students’ 2005 test scores. ADE will then determine if the schools have met the AMOs using the same method and parameters as for other schools. Percent of students assessed will not be evaluated.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. The ADE recommends that the Board lower the attendance rate goal used as the other indicator for AYP determinations from 94 percent to 90 percent.**
- 2. The ADE recommends that the Board adopt the following changes to the AYP evaluation method for small schools.**
  - a. The definition of a small school be changed from “a school with less than 100 students ADM in the baseline year (2001-2002) and less than 30 students in more than 1/3 of its subject/grade values” to “a school that does not have more than the approved minimum group size enrolled in any of the grades evaluated for AYP.”
  - b. The test scores used to determine if a small school has met the annual measurable objectives will be the student scores aggregated by subject and grade for the most recent three years. Subgroups that meet the minimum n-count will be evaluated. The AMO calculation will follow all other formulas, business rules, and parameters used for large schools.
- 3. The ADE recommends that the Board adopt the following change to the AYP evaluation method for K-2 schools.**
  - a. The test scores used to determine if a K-2 school has met the annual measurable objectives will be the student scores on the third grade AIMS matched to the previous year’s rosters of K-2 schools. The AMO calculation will follow all other formulas, business rules, and parameters used for other schools.